

[Medieval Georgia]

THE PEOPLE AND THE POWER

644 charge of all the King's Falconers and dogs and was over all the keepers of the royal woods.

The *Ezot-Modzghvari*, or Master of the Courtyard who had under his inspection all the workshops of the palace.

The *Mzareuli-Ukhtsesi*, or Chief of the Cooks, who was over all the table-servants, the kitcheners, the bakers, water-carriers, musicians and dancers. He was later called by the Persian title of *Chunchirakhi*.

The *Momgheral-Ukhtsesi*, or Chief of the Singers, and the *Juaris-Mtvirtveli* or Cross-Bearer who was the King's messenger to the Catholicos and the Bishops; he also made public pronouncement of all penalties inflicted by royal command.

651. The royal revenues were derived from various sources. First, there were the feudal dues from the estates of the royal house which were paid in large part in kind, but also partly in money.

● [436] Secondly, the Kings of Georgia and the earlier rulers of Iberia coined money for circulation in the realm. Gold and silver was never found in any but negligible quantities within the country, and therefore the rarer metals used for coining and for the manufacture of objects of luxury came at all times from abroad. Large quantities of foreign coins were always in circulation in the country. Money was, however, minted in Georgia with intervals from the second century A.D. down even to the times of the paltry sovereignties of Mingrelia and Imereti, who according to Chardin, had their own mints.¹

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439 Again, the Kings of Georgia and the later rulers of the divided Kingdom imposed customs dues on goods entering the country and on goods in transit. In Chardin's time there were customs levied at Iskaur (Dioscurias-Sukhum), in Abkhazeti and Fasso (Poti) in Mingrelia, and the insolence which he met from the Pasha of Akhaltzikhé's customs officers at Gonia was in the true tradition of the *douane*. There were also provincial and municipal customs where levies were made not only by the King, but by other authorities such as the Catholicos of Mtskheta or the chieftains of Osseti. Boat traffic on the Mtkvari and ferries over this and other rivers were subject to levy, and also caravans entering and leaving Tiflis and Gori.

651 Further, the Kings levied a miscellaneous collection of taxes of all kinds and descriptions. The *Dastulamali* gives a list of taxes paid to the later Kings of Kartli, together with the shares of these taxes to which certain court officials were

¹ Chardin (1686 ed.), pp. 91 and 106.

THE LIFE OF GEORGIA

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Shoes and in a word in all things most necessary for Man's use. There were all sorts of Grocery and Apothecary's Ware, Spices, Perfumes, Drugs and all manner of Ointments. So that the vessel seemed to be a little Town, where everything was to be had."¹

• [436]

Almost all the foreign trade was transacted by barter, and both Chardin and Pitton de Tournefort found that the people preferred to be paid for goods in stuffs and trinkets rather than in currency.

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The long period of perpetual contact, both commercial and political, with their powerful Mussulman neighbours had a profound effect on the peoples of the Caucasus. The more highly civilized Georgians and Armenians, strong in the antique traditions of East Christian culture, were outwardly affected in modes and habits and some ways of thought; the peoples of the mountains, who had not by the fifteenth century emerged from the tribal state, forgot their thin Christianity and became Muslim in culture as well as in outward fashion. Not only did Islam penetrate the remoter valleys of Circassia, but it became the religion of the relatively civilized Meskhians and Abkhaz.²

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The easy religious casuistry of the Georgian princes was natural to them as well as convenient to their political interests. In the seventeenth century the old mediæval culture of Christendom, which had flourished in the Kingdom of Georgia, was half-forgotten, and it was only the more sensitive

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spirits who were prepared still to make sacrifices in the memory of its tradition. The new architecture of Tiflis, in the Mukhranian days, was altogether in the Muslim style; dress, manners, furnishing, were Persian. The position of women was also affected and Chardin noted a tendency, since the Persian rule began in Tiflis, towards the seclusion of women. They went veiled in the streets, while in the country districts, where there were no Mussulmans, they still adhered to the Christian custom.³

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The travellers of the seventeenth century are none too generous in their appraisal of the Georgian character. Chardin has a long diatribe on the Georgians, and he condemns their immorality, their drunkenness, their knavery and their arrogance. But even he admits, by contrary, that "*they are Civil and Courteous and more than that, they are Grave and Moderate*".⁴

¹ Chardin, p. 75.

² For the progress of Islam in Samtskhé during the seventeenth century, see Wak-hushu, *Histoire de Samtskhé*, in Brosset, *H. de la G.*, II, i, 232-3.

³ Chardin, p. 226.

⁴ *Idem.*, p. 191.

692 all kinds of crimes committed. The amount of blood-money required from the offender differed according to sex, age, social status, physical condition, and religion of the slain person. In the payment of the *wergild* the culprit was assisted by his relatives, who were also co-jurors when an oath was taken.

The amount of the *wergild* for the life of a man was higher than that for a woman. Among the Tushes, the murderer of a woman was required to pay an indemnity of thirty cows, which was exactly half the blood-money required for a man's life.¹³

Children and old people were exempt from blood vengeance.

525 In communities where the social life shows stratification, the 692 *wergild* differed according to the social standing of the offender. In Free Svanetia¹³ the *wergild* for the murder of a nobleman was equal to the amount of two bloods.

The same situation prevailed in the whole Georgian Kingdom in times past. "Murder was called blood," Prince Vakhushet writes.¹⁴ "When a man had killed someone equal to himself socially, he was obliged to pay for the blood with silver or cattle, according to the social status of the victim, and the King might arrest, punish, and even kill him. If a man of high social standing killed a man of a lower class, he was obliged to pay for the blood; but if a man of a lower class killed a man of a higher class, he had to pay for the blood and was also deprived of his property for a few years."

The *wergild* for a pregnant woman was higher than that for a woman in normal physical condition.

692 There was also religious discrimination in the payment of the fine for the blood. The *wergild* for the murder of a Christian was higher than that for a Mohammedan. Among the Tushes, the blood-money for killing a Christian consisted of sixty cows, and for a Mohammedan only half that number.

436 The payments were made, not with money, but with various 682 goods available in the community: cows, horses, sheep, copper pots, arms, etc. This is not difficult to comprehend if we take into

¹³ Khakhanov: a, 53.

¹⁴ Besnoville: 106.

¹⁵ Vakhushet: 6.

2 [i.e., of wergild/sec pp/145-146 -- Analyst]

consideration the natural economy of the social life in the communities and the prevailing system of exchange—barter. Among all things used for this purpose, as in currency, there was one which was accepted as the standard of value, with a scale of its valuation in other more common and cheaper things. This standard of value was not the same with the different groups of Georgian Highlanders, nor with the various peoples of the Caucasus; it represented the most valuable object of the people in question, so that with the Circassians it consisted of arms, which were the most cherished and richly ornamented family heirlooms, but payment was made usually with horses or slaves. For the Ossetes the standard of value was the cow; for the Svans it was a certain portion of arable land, called *ts'khadish*; this standard was used because of the scarcity of land suitable for cultivation in their country. Among the Khevsurs, Pshavs and Tushes, the standard of value consisted of cows, and in former times, according to Prince Vakhush¹⁸, in the whole Kingdom of Georgia the "blood was paid with silver or cattle."

Among the Khevsurs there were two different ways of paying the *wergild*. The full amount could be paid either with cows, or paid half with cows and half with money. In the latter case this manner of payment was called *khelit*. The value of an indemnity was fixed at a number of cows, but payment could be made with sheep, arms, horses, copper vessels, etc., with a fixed valuation of each object. "As the payment is not always made with money," writes R. D. Eristov¹⁹ concerning the Khevsurs, "but with cattle, arms, agricultural products and household utensils, everything mentioned, therefore, has one fixed standard of value: a stallion would be equal to seven cows; a mare to four cows; an ox to seven sheep; a cow, four sheep or five rubles; a sheep, one ruble and twenty kopeks; a goat, eighty kopeks; a kid, forty kopeks; arable land yielding one *dseri*, representing the amount of sixty sheaves and giving not less than one *koda* of wheat, is equal to five cows." The valuation of the *wergild* and the technique of its payment as practiced among the Khevsurs in the

¹⁸ Vakhush^t: 6.

¹⁹ Eristov: 133.

- 436 time past are also described by Zisserman.¹⁷ The penalty affixed
 482 by the judges, according to his information, consisted always in the
 exaction from the culprit of a certain sum, depending upon the
 crime committed. Owing to the almost total absence of money, the
 fine is paid with cattle, which has once and forever a fixed price, as
 follows: a mare is equal to twenty rubles; a cow, five rubles; a
 ham, two rubles; a sheep, one ruble and forty kopeks. Every
 object has its valuation not in money but in domestic animals; for
 example, a gun costs twenty cows or one hundred rubles; a horse
 costs ten cows; two rams and one sheep, fifty-five rubles and forty
 kopeks. Again, if the indemnity for a stolen object is to be paid
 with cows, the accused has a right to pay—instead of cows or
 rams—arms, copper vessels, hides, or corn. Every one of the
 above-mentioned objects has its valuation. For example, suppose
 a man is requested to pay twenty-five cows. He may pay this by
 giving a mare, valued at four cows; a mule, valued at eight cows;
 a quantity of copper ($37\frac{1}{2}$ stils),¹⁸ valued at three cows; a sabre,
 valued at seven cows; and three real cows, the sum of all making
 exactly twenty-five cows.

Among the Tushes¹⁹ the value of a horse was equal to eight
 cows or four rubles; a stallion, seven cows; a cow, four sheep;
 an ox, seven sheep; a gun, twenty cows or one hundred rubles; a
 cow, five rubles; a sheep, from one ruble and thirty kopeks to two
 rubles; a goat, eighty kopeks; a *koda* of wheat, five cows.

The blood-money among the Tushes varied in amount to the
 time and locality, consisting of eighty cows,²⁰ of sixty cows,²¹
 and of one hundred and twenty cows.²²

Among the Pshavs the indemnity for blood was three hundred
 and sixty sheep, one hundred and eighty sheep being payable to
 the community of the victim for the so-called "family blood"
 (*siskhli sagvareulo*), while the other one hundred and eighty sheep

¹⁷ Zisserman: 224-5.

¹⁸ A measurement equal to one pound.

¹⁹ Khakhanov: 53.

²⁰ Khakhanov:

²¹ Kovalevsky:

²² Zisserman:

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were paid to the relatives of the dead person, and was called "for ⁴³⁶ the head of the killed" (*thavi patronisa*). ⁶⁸²

The *wergild*, among the Svans, is called *tsor*. In Princely Svanetia, the *tsor* for the murder of a man was not the same in the different communities. For example, in the community of Etseri, the *wergild* consisted in the payment by the murderer and his kinsmen to the kinsmen of the man killed thirteen *ts'khvadish*²³ of land, which is the equivalent of six and one-half Georgian *ktsevs*,²⁴ which in turn is the equivalent of two and one-half Russian *desiatins*.²⁵ Besides this, the kinsmen of the murderer were obliged to give presents to the members of the family of the deceased. These gifts consisted of domestic animals; each member received a certain kind of animal, one received an ox, another a horse, a third a sheep, etc. In the community of Becho, the *wergild* for the same crime was half that in the community previously mentioned. In Becho the indemnity was also paid with portions of land, called *naljons*; twelve *naljons* were paid for blood. If we take into consideration the fact that a *naljon* is only half a *ts'khvadish*, we shall find that the *wergild* paid for murder in both these communities was the same. If there was a difference, it was not very great. In the community of Mestia the *wergild* consisted of twelve *naljons* plus gifts of cattle, payable to the kinsmen of the person murdered. In the community of Ipari,²⁶ the *tsor* for murder was the approximate equivalent of one thousand Russian rubles, including in that sum all obligatory payments and gifts.

It is necessary to note, in addition to the above-stated conditions⁶⁸² in Svanetia, that besides indemnifying to the kinsmen of the murdered man, it was obligatory also to give the weapon with which he was murdered.

In Svanetia, with the payment of every *tsor*, the murderer was always obliged to provide a specially arranged feast for the relatives of the slain man, which also involved great expense. It

²³ Svan measure of land.

²⁴ Measure of land among the Georgians proper.

²⁵ Russian measure of land, equal to 2.70 acres.

²⁶ Kovalevsky: a, II, 36.